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fact that he is, *au fond* and incurably, a poet. Hear him, as a concluding example, in *Peter Keegan's* response to *Broadbent's* question as to what heaven is like in his dreams (after *Broadbent* has described it as appearing to *him* "a sort of pale blue satin place, with all the pious old ladies in our congregation sitting as if they were at a service; and there was some awful person in the study at the other side of the hall"): "In my dreams," rejoins the unfrocked priest, "it is a country where the State is the Church, and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper, and the worshipper the worshipped: three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. . . . It is, in short, the dream of a madman." Any one who can write like that may not, I submit, be satisfactorily catalogued without some rather anxious and scrupulous deliberation.

LAWRENCE GILMAN.

"SISTER CARRIE."*

QUITE apart from its intrinsic merit as a work of literary art, "Sister Carrie" has, for the discriminating, in a marked degree the special interest which any writer's first novel possesses in proportion to the peculiarly individual power it may show as a promise for the future. In this, Mr. Dreiser's book is especially noteworthy, since rarely has a new novelist shown so singular a power of virile earnestness and serious purpose with unusual faculty of keenly analytic characterization and realistic painting of pictures. His people are real people; he compels you to know them as he knows them, to see the scenes amid which they move as he sees them. He shows absolute sincerity, he plays you no tricks; he is rigidly uncompromising, he scorns to tamper with the truth as he knows it, he refuses any subterfuges or weak dallying with what, to him at least, are the crucial facts of life. One may not always accept his philosophy fully and without reserve, but he himself believes in it. That is the general impression the book creates, and he possesses, therefore, a compelling individuality which is bound to make its mark.

"Sister Carrie." A novel. By Theodore Dreiser. New York: B. W. Dodge & Company.

The story is of Caroline Meeber, a girl of eighteen bred in a small country village where her father is a miller, who comes to Chicago to seek an independent livelihood by the work of her hands. She has never been away from home before; she knows nothing about the life of a great city, so strange and marvellous to her inexperienced girlhood. She has come, impelled by some restless but vague and as yet unconscious craving for happiness; and happiness in her crude and immature imaginings is confused with pleasure and the sensation of the stir of life, as it is with so many of her brothers and sisters the world over. This impressionable girl, unsuited for any successful struggle with hardship by temperament or training, is thrown into the whirlpool of city life during the years when character is beginning to form; and she is weighted by a soft attractiveness of face and gentleness of heart. In the opening chapter, on her way to Chicago she meets Drouet, a travelling salesman, who greatly influences her career. Later, she met Hurstwood, the manager of a fashionable drinking resort and in his way a man of respectable position. The conditions under which she comes to live are not justified, nor excused, by any acceptable code. But they are not uncommon, and Mr. Dreiser handles them with such delicacy of treatment and in such a clean largeness of mental attitude, that they simply enforce an impressive moral lesson. The inevitable growth of her initial yielding softness into a hard cold selfishness at the last, but which yet fails to escape from the power of unsatisfied longing, is traced with much skill and with a logic which seems unanswerable. And the parallel working out of Hurstwood's character is surely a convincing piece of literary art.

"Sister Carrie" is a sombre tale. It does not leave you with a bad taste in the mouth, as one says, but with something very like a heartache; an effect even more pronounced here than in Mrs. Wharton's powerful novel, "The House of Mirth," to which it bears a notable similarity in the underlying theme, although widely different in most else. Mr. Dreiser belongs to the realistic school much more distinctly than Mrs. Wharton; he falls below her in grace and beauty of style and in her own characteristic literary art, but he gains in power and in vividness perhaps. The stories told are not the same, the methods of telling differ, but the *motif* in each is at the root of it essentially the

same; the tragedy of human beings who, in our present social order, do not escape the crushing weight of a surrender to primal human impulses. The two books seem inevitably in the same class; they enforce a like moral. One is the complement of the other, with little or no superficial resemblance between them other than that each is of great and sombre power and deals with the same theme—the aberrations of social mankind, in America, in its search for pleasure and in its attempts at some basis for sex relations. In the two books the practical difference is only in the variables, the theme itself is constant. Mrs. Wharton works out her problem on one side, the complex laborious pleasure-seeking cult among that small and comparatively insignificant group, the idle rich; Mr. Dreiser is concerned with the greater and far more important class, the working-people from whose ranks it is that the upper strata of the future are to inherit character; for in this country, at least, the proletariat of to-day begets the leader of to-morrow. It is the great lower and middle classes, if there are such things, that count.

Human nature is a tolerably constant quantity; men and women are pretty much alike in all times and places, and in all environments. Class distinctions, so far as the humanity of their elements is concerned, are more apparent than real; men are of the same nature everywhere. To find a great difference in essential quality between the very rich and the very poor, the very good and the very bad, the very cultured and intelligent and the very ignorant and stupid, we must, after all, take our measurements with a micrometric scale, so to speak; if we attempt to gauge these human differences by the finger of God, they are hard to find. No doubt, one bacillus differs from another in length, but you cannot mark it by a yard-stick. So that the “drummer” and the saloonkeeper who are arbiters of destiny for Sister Carrie are essentially of the same sort as the men who riot in “The House of Mirth,” except that they appear to have retained more human quality of redemption; and the Lily Barts of the world of fashion are but Sister Carries after all. Indeed, the title of Mr. Dreiser’s book is, no doubt, intended to suggest the kinship of the world.

And in these days, perhaps more markedly in America, the process of breaking down the class barriers, of interfusion of the social strata, is taking place with notable distinctness. Not only

are the upper social ranks, or what passes for such, being constantly recruited by those who have lately risen from the lower stratum, but the economic change in industrial conditions is more and more bringing all humanity into closer touch; with the result that the high and mighty influence, as never before, the desires and the ambitions, the passions, too, of those who are low in social degree. As Mr. Dreiser puts it:

"The great create an atmosphere which reacts badly upon the small. This atmosphere is easily and quickly felt. Walk among the magnificent residences, the splendid equipages, the gilded shops, restaurants, resorts of all kinds; scent the flowers, the silks, the wines; drink of the laughter springing from the soul of luxurious content, of the glances which gleam like light from defiant spears; feel the quality of the smiles which cut like glistening swords and of strides born of place, and you shall know of what is the atmosphere of the high and mighty. Little use to argue that of such is not the kingdom of greatness, but so long as the world is attracted by this and the human heart views this as the one desirable realm which it must attain, so long, to that heart, will this remain the realm of greatness. So long, also, will the atmosphere of this realm work its desperate results in the soul of man. It is like a chemical reagent. One day of it, like one drop of the other, will so affect and discolor the views, the aims, the desires of the mind, that it will thereafter remain forever dyed. A day of it to the untried mind is like opium to the untried body. A craving is set up which, if gratified, shall eternally result in dreams and death. Aye! dreams unfulfilled—gnawing, luring, idle phantoms which beckon and lead, beckon and lead, until death and dissolution dissolve their power and restore us blind to nature's heart."

So that, from the sociological point of view, the study presented in this book of existing conditions operating on human impulses which are inextinguishable, and often dominating, is of timely import. There are signs that the future of the race in this country may be more perilous than its past has been; it is possible one of those racial crises which are constantly recurring in the history of mankind, may be on the way. "*Sister Carrie*" is a book to be reckoned with, just as the social conditions—or defects—on which it rests must be reckoned with.

JOSEPH HORNOR COATES.